20171026 Genesis 1:1-6:8 **"Lessons for Living: A Christian Walk through the Torah"**

"In the Beginning, GOD ....."
Series: "Lessons for Living: A Christian Walk through the Torah" by Faber McMullen, Union Grove Baptist Church ©2017

B'reisheet | בראשית | *"In the beginning "*
Torah: Genesis 1:1-6:8

Today we start the Torah from its beginning. This is the great introduction. This is where it all starts. The sages tell us, "We do not start the Torah afresh because it is a New Year, rather we know that it is a New Year because we once again begin the reading of the Torah." As we open God's Word and once again make our way from the beginning, somehow it can be as though we have never read it before.
One of the great mysteries of reading the Bible is that a particular passage that we might read today will have a wholly different meaning the next time that we read it. Why is this? It is because the "Word of God is alive and powerful, sharper than a two edged sword. It is living. It is active. It is powerful. It is discerning." (Hebrews 4:12).

And here again, once again, we are at the beginning, and it is my hope that as we hear these words spoken we will understand things we have never understood, and we will sense the supernatural in it all. It is easy to get sidetracked as we study creation. Everyone and everything want to take us away from the central truth that is different than all other dialogues about creation. It pulls us again and again from the real question: the WHO of creation.

The world is full of "Experts" who give opinions about how this all happened. Their theories are rife with measurements of time and space. For every scientific explanation and/or justification of their timing methods, there are equal arguments against those measurements. The discussion always gets bogged down in the **how** which depends upon the **when**. How did it all happen? When did it all happen? Was it the big bang that started it all or was it merely lightning that triggered the actions and reactions bringing forth acids and amino acids?[1] Was it as some suggest the spontaneous generation of the first molecules of life on particles of clay? [2]

The expert opinions concerning how creation happened are not new. They began millennia ago. The Egyptians believed that Geb, who was a bearded man with a goose on his head, was the divine provider of crops and healing. Their experts

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[1] https://www.livescience.com/13363-7-theories-origin-life.html
[2] https://www.livescience.com/13363-7-theories-origin-life.html

determined that Geb married Nut (the sky goddess), and Re (the sun god) became so angry it ultimately ended in earth being divided from the sky. [3]

The Aztecs had their Coatlicue, the "Serpent Skirt", who was the goddess of life and death. She was hungry for human sacrifices. She eventually gave birth after a ball of feathers fell into the temple where she was sweeping. Her child (whose name I won't even try to pronounce) emerged from the womb armed and ready to save her from her 400 other angry children. The emerging child cut off his sister's head and threw it into the sky. And thus, we have the moon.

The Greeks had their Gaea whom they worshipped as their "mother earth" who was the creator of all things that we know here on earth. The Chinese had their Hou Ji who brought it all about. He was worshipped as the god of earth or god of grain. The Incas, the Maya, the Maori, the Norse, and the Sumerians all had their mythological creators of the world who usually were involved in some cosmological conflict or supernatural pregnancy that resulted in the earth being created.

Now, I want you to go back in time. Go back to those ancient civilizations and think about how radical and unconventional it was for a prince who had become a shepherd to sit down with his papyrus in hand or perhaps a piece of lamb's skin, and how unusual it would be for him to write the words, ***"B'reisheet barah Elohim ha shamayim v ha aretz"***..... "In the beginning, God created out of nothing, the heavens and the earth". This was outrageous. It was radical. These are the simple words that say "At the head of things or when it all began there was God and it was He and He alone that created the heavens and the earth". It didn't involve a corn god, a giant tortoise, a war in the heavens, or a lesser god cutting off another god's head.

These words demand an answer. These words are so bothersome because if God did indeed create heaven and earth, then "what should be my involvement, relationship, or response to Him?" What is my duty to Him? What does He expect of me? What is my purpose on earth? Why am I here? How do I fit into all of this?

Randomness avoids these real questions. It gives these questions a pass. It talks about the how and the when, but it never comes home to the WHO. The WHO is frightening. The WHO demands a response.

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. [2] The earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters. [3] Then God said, "Let there be light"; and there was light. [4] And God saw the light, that *it was* good;

[3] https://www.windows2universe.org/mythology/geb_earth.html

and God divided the light from the darkness. [5] God called the light Day, and the darkness He called Night. So the evening and the morning were the first day.[4]

I want to take just a moment to show you that all three persons of the Godhead were present at Creation. Notice that God the father is there in the first three Hebrew words. Verse two tells us that the ***Ruach Elohim ,*** the Spirit of God was hovering over the waters. Church, that was the Holy Spirit present at creation. So now you may be wondering where Jesus was in all of this. Let's turn for a moment to John 1:1

> In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] He was in the beginning with God. [3] All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. [4] In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. [5] And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.

So Church, who is the Word? Who is the "Logos"? The Logos is Jesus. Jesus was there at creation. He was present. John tells us that without Him nothing was made. And we are told in Hebrews 11:3 that it was by the mere word of God that the heavens were formed, "[3] By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that the things which are seen were not made of things which are visible.

[6] Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." ..... [8] And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day.

[9] Then God said, "Let the waters under the heavens be gathered together into one place, and let the dry *land* appear"; and it was so. [10] And God called the dry *land* Earth, and the gathering together of the waters He called Seas. And God saw that *it was* good..... And God saw that *it was* good. [13] So the evening and the morning were the third day.

[14] Then God said, "Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens to divide the day from the night; .....[16] Then God made two great lights: the greater light to rule the day, and the lesser light to rule the night. *He made* the stars also. ..... And God saw that *it was* good. [19] So the evening and the morning were the fourth day.

[20] Then God said, "Let the waters abound with an abundance of living creatures, and

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[4] *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 1:1–5). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

let birds fly above the earth across the face of the firmament of the heavens." [21] So God created great sea creatures and every living thing that moves, with which the waters abounded, according to their kind, and every winged bird according to its kind. And God saw that *it was* good. ..... [23] So the evening and the morning were the fifth day.

[24] Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth the living creature according to its kind: cattle and creeping thing and beast of the earth, *each* according to its kind"; and it was so. ..... [26] Then God said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth." [27] So God created man in His *own* image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. [28] Then God blessed them, and God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it; have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over every living thing that moves on the earth."

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[31] Then God saw everything that He had made, and indeed *it was* very good. So the evening and the morning were the sixth day.[5]

First, I want to say that I have devoted knowledgeable scientifically brilliant friends that are Young Earth Creationists. That means that they believe the world came into existence 6-7 thousand years ago. They believe that when the account says "day" it means a 24 hour day. And they believe that Adam and Eve were real people who walked on the earth and that the account in Genesis is an historical account. These friends interpret the early accounts in Genesis at face value and through a simple reading of the text. This group believes that God created the universe. They believe in Christ as their Savior and Lord and they believe that Jesus' work on the cross served as the atonement for their sins.

Secondly I will say that I have devoted knowledgeable scientifically brilliant friends who believe in Theistic Evolution. They believe that God set things into motion and through His guiding hand things evolved to what we see today. They generally believe that man descended from a long line of biological organisms transitioning through branches of hominoids that became humans as we know them. They interpret the passages of early Genesis by means of a construct giving context to the sociological time and place of the scripture. They see this construct of creation differently than other scriptures. In their approach the interpretation does not affect the truth of other scriptures. This group believes that God created the

[5] *The New King James Version*. (1982). (Ge 1:6–31). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.

universe. They believe in Christ as their Savior and Lord and they believe that Jesus' work on the cross served as the atonement for their sins.

I have a third group of friends who believe that the earth may be very old (perhaps billions of years old), but that at some point there was possibly a recreation of the earth. This group generally believes that the earth was created in verse 1 and then perhaps it was destroyed causing it to be "null and void" and then the account we read is that of a new Creation. They generally believe that Adam and Eve were real people from whom we all descend and that man as he is today did not evolve from any hominid or other life form. Rather those forms co-existed with man as we know him to be. This group believes that God created the universe. They too believe in Christ as their Savior and Lord and they believe that Jesus' work on the cross served as the atonement for their sins.

So the real question becomes "which group is right"? I'm tempted to answer like Simba the Lion King who wisely said, "Why does it matter. It's all in the past." I've taken the time to go through these differing viewpoints so that you won't be caught off guard when you hear these different viewpoints among Christ-Followers. Each of these groups credit God with being the author of the universe. What matters most in each of them is the last sentence that I said about each group: "They believe in Christ as their Savior and Lord and they believe that Jesus' work on the cross served as the atonement for their sins." And let me add, adherence to anyone of these three positions on the how of Creation will not get you into heaven. What gets you to heaven is the last sentence that I've read concerning what these groups believe.

I do want to leave you with a few of my observations about creation. These are my observations as a theologian and a lawyer. So they may be lacking scientifically.

1 God did it in the fullness of His being. The Trinity was present at creation and the Trinity spoke the world into existence.

2 Creation was not random. Creation was not chaotic. There was an order to creation, and that order is spelled out in the biblical account. God did not mention DNA or any other building blocks in the creation story because the story is not a scientific summary. The creation account tells us more about the WHO behind it all than the HOW or the WHEN behind it all.

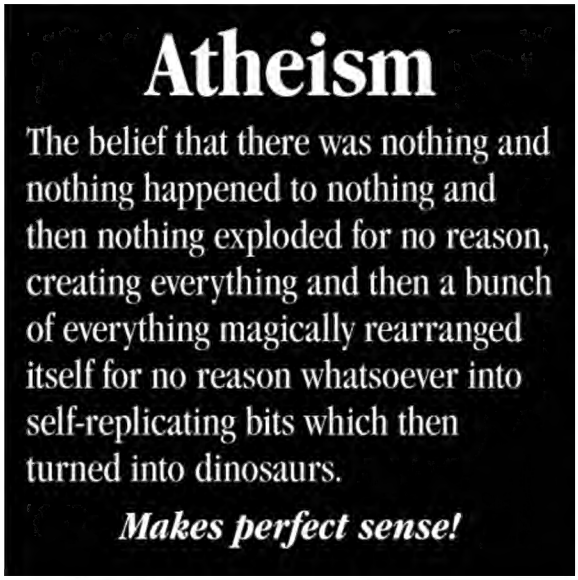
3 The fact that man is made up of DNA similar to that of a frog doesn't mean that man comes from a frog anymore than that a frog comes from a man. It would be like saying that because cupcakes and cakes have the same ingredients we can be

fairly certain that cakes evolved from cupcakes. DNA is the brick and mortar that God used to put together all living things. It is part of His fingerprint in all of Creation.

4 Scientific DNA research has lead us back to a prototype man (Adam) and a common mother (Eve). Geneticists date this back to approximately 250,000 years depending on mutations, etc. for their accounting of time. The timing of mutations may have varied tremendously with differing conditions on earth over time.

5 Evolutionary theory runs contrary to the 2nd Law of Thermo Dynamics that states that "All things are moving to a greater state of entropy". ie... things are falling apart. Things are not becoming more refined, sophisticated, and developed.

6 The universe, including the earth, is so perfect in its balance and timing that by mere rationale it cannot be random. The great historian Paley observed that if one were to find a gold watch it would be unthinkable to believe it came into being by a random act. A logical look at the universe demonstrates a Divine Architect.



Atheists must come up with a theory that doesn't include a superior being or a divine architect. They have to do this or they are faced with the possibility of a responsibility and duty to a creator; their creator. When the big-bang is contemplated the elephant in the room becomes "Who or what set off the Big Bang?" When the conversation turns to lightning that set off the development of amino acids, the question of course is "Where did the lightning come from?" Atheistic evolution always starts with a something to evolve into something else. It never answers who or what made that first something.

Believers are comforted when we read the words, "In the Beginning, God created the heavens and the earth." It tells us that He made the universe and all that is in it. We are comforted when we read that He made us in His image. This gives us value and worth. We are not merely another step in the evolution of a primordial mass into a more developed version of that primordial mass. He has a plan, a purpose, and a place for each of us. Let us Pray

Union Grove is one of the oldest Baptist communities of faith in the State of Texas dating back to 1844. Pastor Faber McMullen may be reached by email at uniongrove362@gmail.com or by snail mail at: 15301 FM 362, Navasota, Texas 77868 Tel: 936-825-1227